

ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

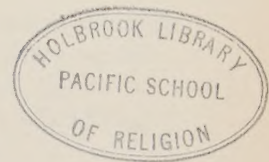
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the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION



The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 7

Fourteen Year

February 21, 1947

GREECE

The Greek Church Accepts the Invitation of the World Council

On February 8, 1947 the delegation of the World Council of Churches which is visiting the Greek-speaking Orthodox Churches (see E.P.S. No. 4) was received officially by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. Archbishop Damaskinos stated on behalf of the Holy Synod that the Church of Greece was ready to accept the invitation to take part in the first Assembly of the World Council in 1948.

E.P.S. Geneva

GREAT BRITAIN

An Invaluable Ecumenical Handbook

A new and completely revised edition of "A Christian Year Book" has been issued by the Student Christian Movement Press. In its present form this handbook is the most practical, complete and up to date reference book concerning the life of the Churches and of the ecumenical movement which is available. There are sections on the following subjects: I. The Christian Church - A survey of beliefs, organisations, and origins of its main Communion. II. The Ecumenical Movement - Missionary cooperation, Christian Unity, World Council of Churches, Youth, the British Council of Churches, the Christian Frontier Council. III. Christianity and Judaism. IV. Christian Education. V. Christian Social Witness. VI. Christian Witness in the Post-war World - Evangelism at home and abroad, Christian Reconstruction in Europe and the East, The Challenge of atomic power, International relations, The Church in society, Prisoners of War. VII. Religious Broadcasting. VIII. A Survey of Christendom. IX. A Directory of Churches, Societies and Periodicals.

Since the Handbook is first of all intended for a British public many of the articles are written by British churchmen. But the section on "A Survey of Christendom" contains short original articles from church leaders of many countries. Special attention should also be called to the comprehensive and yet concise section on "The Historic Eastern Churches" and on "The Ecumenical Movement". It is to be hoped that this fine instrument of ecumenical education will be used very widely (Price: 5/-).

E.P.S. Geneva

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UNITED STATESReconciliation Between Patriarchate and
The Russian Church in America

In a cable received by the Metropolitan Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in America, Patriarch Alexis of Moscow announced that he has raised the decree of suspension imposed upon the Church more than ten years ago and has agreed in principle to the demands for complete autonomy for the Russian Church in America.

These demands were made by a Sobor of the American Church which was held in Cleveland, Ohio, last November (see I.C.P.I.S. No. 45, 1946). The Sobor adopted a resolution requesting Patriarch Alexis "to continue the Russian Orthodox Church in America in his fold as its spiritual head", provided the American Church retains "full administrative autonomy".

In his telegramme, Patriarch Alexis added that details of agreements concerning the American Church's autonomy will be left to Metropolitan Theophilus of San Francisco and Metropolitan Gregory of Leningrad, who will leave Russia for the United States as soon as he secures a visa, to act on behalf of the Moscow Patriarchate. Patriarch Alexis lifted the suspension placed upon the American Church by declaring that "from now on, our spiritual and prayerful communion is reinstated", and by imparting his solemn blessing to the Church headed by Metropolitan Theophilus.

Meanwhile, a committee appointed by the Cleveland Sobor is working on the draft of a new constitution for the American Church "on democratic lines". The draft is expected to be made available within one year and will be submitted for final approval at the next Sobor. E.P.S.Geneva

JAPANExpansion and Its Difficulties

Japanese Christianity has been hindered since the surrender of Japan by the official yen-dollar exchange rate (fifteen yen to one dollar), which decreases the American aid for the struggling congregations. Missionaries have been allowed to enter the country with the proviso that they maintain themselves like the Japanese, asking the occupation authorities for nothing. This means that they cannot buy food, gasoline or other supplies for dollars from the quartermaster. They must buy from the Japanese at the inflation prices, and they would not be missionaries if they had not the moral sense to refuse to buy on the black market.

Another handicap is the lack of native leadership. Before the war most of the mission boards had surrendered control to Japanese Christians, but the majority of these are too inexperienced to take the lead under the present difficult conditions.

Around Kobe, Osaka and Kyoto the congregations are reported to be overflowing with new comers who outnumber the members. Headquarters officials declare that the field for Christianity is more open than at any time in the past. Most plans for rebuilding and expansion, however, must await either the end of the current inflation or a modification of the present yen-dollar exchange rate.

The Emperor's Interest in Christianity.-

For the first time in history, Christian missionaries have had an audience with Emperor Hirohito. The emperor expressed great interest in their activities, urging that spiritual and moral reform be emphasized in the rebuilding of the nation. Prince Kaya has invited M. Kozaki, Moderator of the United Church, to hold monthly Bible studies in his home. These incidents do not necessarily imply that the imperial family is ready to embrace Christianity, but they do represent considerable advance towards official recognition of the Christian faith in Japan. E.P.S.Geneva

U.N.E.S.C.O.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) called together in Paris, February 13-15, 1947, a very representative gathering of delegates from international voluntary organisations related to reconstruction and rehabilitation to consider problems in these important areas of service. Thirty-eight organisations accepted this invitation, among them being the World Council of Churches, the World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, the World's Young Women's Christian Association and the World Student Christian Federation. A number of Roman Catholic and also of Jewish organisations were among the thirty-eight. Fifteen organisations sent observers, thus making a total of 53 organizations that were represented by 98 persons.

The chief topics under consideration were embodied in three papers presented by staff officers of UNESCO, as follows: the general problems of educational, scientific and cultural reconstruction in relation to UNESCO's long term programme by M. Jean Thomas, Assistant to the Director General; the immediate problems and the mutual cooperation of the international voluntary organisations and UNESCO by Mr. B. Drzewieski, Director of the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Section; and the proposal for the formation of an Emergency Council of international voluntary organisations for educational, scientific and cultural reconstruction by M. de Blonay, Senior Counsellor, External Relations Section.

Each of these papers was discussed quite generally, and the delegates voted approval of the formation of the proposed Emergency Council of voluntary agencies and requested UNESCO's secretariate to prepare, in the light of the views expressed in this Conference, a revised plan for submission to the organisations represented. It was also agreed that as soon as possible, perhaps in April or May, a second Conference should be called for the purpose of establishing the proposed Emergency Council.

The organisations whose representatives were present that are concerned with the place of religion in these areas of reconstruction were made to feel that their presence and their counsel were most welcome. Indeed, the Director, Mr. Drzewieski, included within his presentation the following significant statement:

"We are all, the Secretariate of UNESCO and the members of the voluntary organisations, in line on one point. There is one sure base for our common activities. The problem of educational and cultural reconstruction is not only a material one. All are deeply conscious of what some will call a spiritual, some a cultural some an intellectual crisis, a collapse of moral and spiritual values as the result of the war. The nations are divided. We have so far been unable to build up world unity. Our activity in educational reconstruction can serve as a mass manifestation of goodwill and service, a mass demonstration of a universal desire to help to unify the nations in cooperation and friendship, to provide the basis for lasting peace and to avoid another war".

E.P.S.Geneva

UNITED STATESThe Italian Constitution and Religious Liberty

A delegation composed of seven representatives of Protestant Churches belonging to the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America was received by Monsieur De Gasperi, when he was staying in the United States. The delegation emphasised that the attitude of the American people towards Italy will be largely determined by the decisions taken by the Italian Constitution in favour of religious freedom. A memorandum was presented to Monsieur De Gasperi. When asked whether the Concordat of 1929 would be inserted in the new Constitution, Monsieur

De Gasperi replied "that he did not think the terms of the Concordat would be included in the Constitution"

The Italian Protestant periodical "La Luce" (Feb. 15, 1947), declares that "Monsieur De Gasperi's reply is totally inadequate, for the question is not to know whether the 'terms' of the Concordat will or will not be included in the Constitution. The important thing is to know whether the Italian Constitution will contain an explicit allusion that 'the relations between the Church and the State are based on the Treaties of Lateran of 1929', which would thus condone the abolition of religious liberty in Italy and deprive the Italians of one of the four basic freedoms, for which so much blood has been shed in the whole world during these last ten years."

E.P.S. Geneva

The World Council Through Roman Catholic Eyes

The Roman Catholic press has just published two articles on the World Council of Churches. The great Roman Jesuit magazine, "La Civiltà Cattolica" (February 15, 1947) contains an article by R.P.C. Crivelli on "The Pan-Protestant Ecumenical Conference in 1948". After giving the history of the ecumenical movement, the names on the Provisional Committee, the Statutes, organisation and activities of the World Council, and mentioning the foundation of the Institute at Bossey, and the names of the Churches who have joined, the author concludes:

"Catholics are watching attentively, but with a quiet serenity, all the questions which are troubling the Protestant world. Unfortunately they perceive the futility of their efforts and they wonder how long the Protestants will go on clinging to their two favourite principles: the free interpretation of the Word of God, and their refusal to recognise the authority of the Pope. It seems strange to us too that our separated brothers should be looking for the invisible "Una Sancta", as if Our Lord had founded His Church in order to keep it hidden for twenty centuries until the World Council discovered it. The true Church of Christ is not hidden, it is visible to all; one needs only open one's eyes to see it. And we Catholics pray every day that the special grace of Our Lord may be granted to all men of good will."

In the "Mission Bulletin" published at Bruges, Belgium (No. 3, 1947) Dom Clement Lialine, O.S.B., editor of the magazine "Irénikon" devotes an article to "Unitas" (see I.C.P.I.S. No. 13, 1946) and to the World Council of Churches. He gives a very objective account of the Report on the meetings of the Provisional Committee in February 1946, and concludes: "The World Council is faced by the problem of winning the peace after having won the war - in the same way as the world which it claims to represent. In this aim the good wishes of all Christians go with it".

E.P.S. Geneva

U.S.S.R.

News of the Baptists

According to a correspondent in Moscow of the Religious News Service (U.S.A.), Soviet authorities have given permission for the creation of new Baptist seminaries in Russia and for the reopening of a previously-established theological school. This announcement was made on January 23, by M. Jacob Zhidkov, Chairman of the Baptist and Evangelical Union in the U.S.S.R., who added that Sunday schools do not exist in the Soviet Union as the constitution does not permit religious instruction to children except in their homes.

The Baptist and Evangelical Union, said Mr. Zhidkov, comprises 150,000 Baptists and an equal number of Evangelicals, but as many as four million persons regularly attend services in 3,000 churches scattered throughout the country. About 70 per cent of the Baptist and Evangelical pastors in Russia also work in other occupations,

mainly in factories and offices, and on collective farms.

Questioned regarding facilities for Bible printing in Russia, Mr. Zhidkov replied: "Since the Revolution, there have been two Bible printings, in 1926, when 25,000 copies were printed, and in 1927, when 10,000 were printed. In each case the printings were done on presses owned by the State". In 1940 the Union received large numbers of Bibles in Russian from missionary societies in London, New York, and Chicago, which were sent via the Baltic republics. "At present, declared Mr. Zhidkov, there is a paper shortage, but we have been given official authority to print Bibles and hope to do so soon".

E.P.S. Geneva

France

Lent Sermons

Pastor Marc Boegner, President of the French Protestant Federation, will preach a series of sermons during Lent this year, for the eighteenth time; the sermons will be broadcast by Radio-Diffusion Francaise. They will be given at the Reformed church at Passy on Fridays, February 21st and 28th, and March 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th at 6 p.m. The subject will be: What is a Christian?

E.P.S. Geneva

FRANCE

Congress of the Social Gospel Movement

The Congress of the French Federation of the Social Gospel Movement (Fédération Française du Christianisme Social) met at Lyons from February 16 to 18, 1947. Its general theme was "The Organisation of Peace and the Block of the Powers". About 150 delegates from all parts of the country, and a number of friends from Lyons and district, took part in the Congress, which opened with a public service in one of the churches in the town. In addition to a number of reports on the international situation, the Congress listened to a lecture by Pastor André Trocmé, European secretary of the Reconciliation Movement, on the present tasks of the Church for the promotion of peace. The lecturer quoted numerous passages from reports from the British Council of Churches and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, relating to the problem of atomic energy. He showed that it was absolutely essential for the Church to adopt an attitude of vigilance and true pacifism, whereas the threat of a new totalitarianism on a world-wide scale calls for a new form of Christian resistance and action. Pastor Trocmé emphasised the fact that the ecumenical movement had enabled all the members of the Church of Christ to realise afresh their deep fundamental unity and to create a real ecumenical theology, and he insisted that it was essential to build up an ecumenical morality, based on this theology, which would guide the local and national Churches and carry weight in great international decisions.

Over 2,500 persons attended a big public lecture by Pastor Elie Lauriol of Paris on "Our Fight For Peace", given in the Bourse du Travail.

The Congress closed with a report from Monsieur Jacques Martin, the general secretary, on the activity of the movement and the adoption of several resolutions which will be passed on to the authorities concerned.

E.P.S. Geneva

Conference on Evangelism

The Conference on Evangelism was held at Geneva from February 11 to 19, 1947, under the auspices of the Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches (see E.P.S. No. 6), including a religious retreat.

The work accomplished by the Conference is summarised in the following communiqué addressed to the Churches:

"The Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid of the World Council of Churches, convinced that such reconstruction is closely linked with the urgent need for evangelism, called a Conference in Geneva of representatives of the Churches of 15 different nations in order to discuss the present position of evangelism in the world.

The main work of the Conference was carried out by six Commissions, which dealt with the following questions:

1. The spiritual status of the Church in relation to the post-war world.
2. New methods and special types of evangelism.
3. Evangelism in the normal work of the Church.
4. Evangelism and the ecumenical approach, with a consideration of inter-Church evangelistic efforts and the place of the World Council in evangelistic work.
5. Evangelism among youth.
6. Evangelistic work through the press, radio, the cinema.

Over and above the value of the discussions on these subjects, the members of the Conference, many of them from countries which, have been isolated from one another by the years of war, have been impressed by the fact that the situation which confronts us is essentially the same situation. That situation is one which is characterised by a belief that humanity can create a satisfying life without God. It is a belief in man and in man's ideologies and not a belief in God. Among many people that belief is now giving way to despair.

The Conference was also impressed by the fact that in our several countries we have been guided by the Spirit to use the same methods in dealing with the situation, methods which are described in the Reports of the various Commissions, which will be published. Moreover, we are all convinced of the urgency of the need of evangelisation and of the call of God to go into all the world. May we go together, each faithful to the truth as he sees it, but all bound together in the fellowship of the Spirit to proclaim the Lordship of Christ. E.P.S. Geneva

DENMARK

The Church and the Refugees

At the beginning of this year a convention was held in one of the biggest refugee camps in Denmark for a number of German refugee clergymen. The initiative came from the "Church Ministry to German Refugees in Denmark" whose leader is the chairman of the Ecumenical Council of Denmark, Dean H. Hogsbro.

The German clergymen experienced a great enrichment in spending a few days together with Danish clergymen and they expressed their gratitude for the new inspiration for their work amongst fellow-countrymen in the refugee camps in Denmark. The German pastors had the opportunity of talking freely of the many sore points and delicate questions connected with their enforced stay in Denmark. They agreed that it was necessary to keep the refugees in internment camps as it would otherwise result in chaotic and almost insoluble moral complications among the 200,000 refugees. E.P.S. Geneva

Danish Initiative in Organising Ecumenical Study Course.- The Danish Ecumenical Council is arranging a study course for some 70 foreign clergymen, to be held at Krogerup from May 1 to 31, 1947, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches. Invitations have been sent to Czech, Austrian, Hungarian and German Clergymen of the Lutheran, Reformed and United Churches and a few teachers. The purpose of the course is to further ecumenical understanding and international reconciliation. E.P.S. Geneva

